
* " GILDED GOSPEL " *
* (SHORT THIRTY MINUTE VERSION) *
* Property of Johnnie Speer. *
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" G I L D E D G O S P E L "

CAST

REVEREND JONES GENTLE OLD CHARACTER

BRUCE JUVENILE HEAVY

DEACON TUTTLE CHARACTER HEAVY

TOBY COMEDY

ARABELLA BUTTS COMEDY OLD MAID

MARY PORTER LEAD

SETTING

The interior of ~~Reverend~~ Reverend Jones's parsonage.

C. D. Windows on each side. And doors R. and L.

PROPS

Table

Three chairs

Thunder and lightening effects

Explosion effect

Small bible

Baby wrapped up in bundle

Snake

Basket of eggs.

GILDED GOSPEL

DEACON TUTTLE

(ENTERS C. WITH TOBY BY THE EAR) Come right in here, you young imp of satan. I'm going to tell the parson all about this.

REVEREND JONES

(ENTERS L.) Here! Here! What's the meaning of this? What's the matter Deacon Tuttle?

DEACON

Matter enough! This young tramp you've picked up is going to jail Reverend Jones. He's been into my apple orchard again. This is the third time he's been it it.

TOBY

That's a lie. It aint the third time.

REVEREND

What is it?

TOBY

It's the fourth; he didn't see me once.

DEACON

Well, it's going to stop. Reverend Jones, the congregation don't approve of you supporting this here fellow. He's a stranger of doubtful character---came in here on a box car.

TOBY

T'weren't neither--it was a cattle dtrain.

REVEREND

Now let's not quarell. Deacon, I'm sorry if Toby has misbehaved. I'm sure he won't take any more of your apples, will you, Toby?

TOBY

Naw, his old apples taste like he looks.

DEACON

How's that?

TOBY

Sour, and full of worms.

DEACON

I'm telling you, Reverend Jones, it's not wise keeping this boy under your own roof. And futhermore if he can't put on a good suit when he comes to church on Sunday, let him stay out. We don't want tramps in our church. ~~WHEN HE'S ENTERED THE CHURCH~~

ARABELLA

(ENTERS C.) Oh where is that young scamp? Oh there you are! (TO TOBY)

TOBY

Oh here's old Pathe News?

ARABELLA

You young flit you how dare you sneak in my house and put hop toads in my bed.

Toby, have you done such a terrible thing as this?

TOBY

Yes I did. She makes me sick. That aint all I done; I put a garter snake in her shoe. She aint got no sense of humor at all.

ARABELIA

It looks to me like a minister of the gospel would surely abstain from such indiffident, poorly annalyzed exhibits of the the lower development of mankind.

TOBY

Gosh Miss Buts where did you get such big words any way?

ARABELIA

Why out of my head of course.

TOBY

I'd hate to have 'em in my stomach.

ARABELIA

Oh mercy.' He's terrible. By the way, Reverend Jones, where is Bruce your ward. We are going to make him very proud before long. You'll find out after the trustees of the church meet tonight.

DEACON

Don't say anything just now, Arabella.

ARABELIA

Now I shan't. You knowme, Deacon, I'm a woman of few words.

TOBY

Yeah, but you sure do use those few words a lot. You know more about everybody's business than the newspapers. Pathe News that's what I'm going to call you. Pathe News! Sees all, knows all, and tells all

ARABELIA

Oh you heathen! Anybody that plays with snakes and toads is not right. Don't you know that those toads will make warts on your fingers? Wherever a toad touches you will have warts.

TOBY

Oh boy, and I put 'em in her bed. (BRUCE ENTERS) Hello, Bruce.

ARABELIA

Oh we want to see you, Bruce. My what a fine looking young man you are. I wish you were my son.

BRUCE

Thank you, Miss Butts. (TO REV.) Father, I'm going to tear down a part of that old garden wall. I don't like it. It's too old. I'll put up a new one that's mor e artistic. That's what an architect should do---tear down the old, and buikld new,

REV.

That old wall was out there when I first came to this town thirty years ago, Bruce.

BRUCE

Yes, and so was this house, and the church you preach in. It's old and rough looking and should be torn down. They're both a disgrace to the town.

I should say, but did you hear the latest? You know that Mary Porter that works for Judd Grey, the banker?

TOBY

Gee, she's the prettiest girl in town.

ARABELLA

And her beauty has cost her the honor and respect of the community. She'll have to be thrown out of the church, Reverend Jones. She has a baby and refuses to give the name of the father. We can't have such trash as that in our church.

REVEREND

Well, you can't throw the poor girl out of the church. If she has fallen by the wayside it is the church that should help her.

DEACON

Such tramps as she should be run out of town. Old Judd fired her, the minute he heard it.

REVEREND

But what will the poor girl do?

ARABELLA

That is not our worry. She can't belong to our church and teach Sunday School either.

TOBY

Aw gosh, she's the best Sunday School teacher that ever was!

ARABELLA

A Sunday School teacher should have culture and refinement, an education

TOBY

I suppose you think you're qualified. Who could go to Sunday School and think about the Lord with an old devil like you in front of him?

ARABELLA

Oh I won't stand for that.

TOBY

Well, sit down for it. (LOOKS OUT WINDOW) Oh look, there's Mary Porter now. She's got a bundle in her arms. (NOISE OFF STAGE) They're running her out of town. Look at them kids makin' fun of her. That aint right.

DEACON

It is right. and there's my little nephew Oswald out there at the head of the gang.

TOBY

When I get through with him, he'll be at the end of the gang. (STARTS)

DEACON

Toby, what are you going to do?

TOBY

I'm going to beat hell out of your little Oswald.

DEACON

Toby's going to regret that if he hits Oswald. It's a disgrace.

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(NOISE OF STAGE THEN ENTER WITH MARY SUPPORTING HER AND CARRYING A BABY
Come on in here, Mary. Reverend Jones, won't turn you out. Don't
worry, Mary. Gee, parson, she's about all in. What the heck am I
gonna do with this.

ARABELLA

Her baby! A squalling little brat without a father.

TOBY

The heck it is. I'm gonna be its papa.

REVEREND

(COMFORTING HER) There there, Mary, you'd better lie down now.

MARY

Oh now no! I've got to. The whole town is laughing at me---even
the children that I loved and taught. They told me to leave town and
I'll go.

REV.

No, you are not going until you have had assistance.

ARABELLA

You mean you are going to take that girl under your own roof, Parson?

REV.

Yes!

DEACON

You can't do it! The church will cast the both of you out. Such a
disgrace! You have forgotten, Reverend Jones, that this is a parsonage
and not a gathering place for tramps.

REVE.

I haven't forgotten that I am in the service of God, and no matter
whether they be rich or poor, they are all His children. And who are
we to cast punishment upon our own flock?

BRUCE

But, father, you can't let a girl like that stay here.

REV.

Bruce, twenty years ago, you were left on my doorstep all wrapped up
in a little bundle. There was a note beside that little bundle and
it read, "Please care for my son, and bring him up in the pathway of
God" I took the little child that you were then and raised you to
manhood and success. I asked no questions³/₄ Who knows but what the
mother who laid that bundle on my doorstep might have suffered the
same agony of regret and shame that this poor girl now bears?

ARABELLA

Oh this will be good to tell. I'm going right now down to Mrs.
Judds. Landsakes get out of my way, Toby. (PUSHES HIM AND EXITS C.)

TOBY

Extra! Special Edition. Hear all about the big scandal. Don't buy
a paper ask Arabella.

BRUCE

If that girl stays here I move.

Come to my house and stay, Bruce I'd be proud to have you.

BRUCE

All right, Deacon, I shall.

DEACON

And this will cost you your job, Reverend. (EXITS C.)

REV.

My job, but no my manhood. Mary, you are welcome to stay here as long as I have a roof to protect you,

TOBY

And we'll help you care for the kid. In fact, I'll--I'll be a mother to it.

REV.

Why, Toby, you don't know how to raise babies do you? You've never had any experience have you?

TOBY

No, but I raised a litter of pups once!

***** NUMBER ONE))*****

ARABELIA

Well, I see that girl is still staying at the parson's home.

TOBY

Yes, and she's gonna stay here as long as she wants to.

ARABELIA

That will not be long. Reverend Jones is going to be asked to resign. The trustees are going to build a new church, a great big church on the Main Street, and we are going to tear down that little bron church down there in the valley. Reverend Jones cannot preach in the new church because he has funny old fashioned ideas, and our church is going to be modern.

TOBY

Reverend Jones is the best preacher that ever told a sinner to go to hell.

ARABELIA

Toby, how dare you swear in front of a lady?

TOBY

Gosh, you're nice aint you? If I was as good as you think you are, I'd grow wings and fly. (EXITS L.)

DEACON

(ENTERS MC.) Well, Arabella, you here already? Is the Reverend in? I suppose he's out visiting some more trash. Just as soon as the new church is built we are going to do away with him and his beggars.

ARABELIA

And aren't the plans Bruce drew up wonderful? I'm so proud of the boy.

DEACON

He's a mighty fine lad. Too bad we can't get any line on who his parents were.

I wish he had been left on your doorstep, Deacon.

DEACON

Now, Arabella, how could I have raised the lad? I don't know a thing about children. Of course if I--had--er well a sweet little woman like you for a wife.

ARABELLA

Now, Deacon, don't become too flattering. You know I can't resist you.

DEACON

Arabella, I don't want you to resist me. Why can't we get married?

ARABELLA

Oh we're so---well, just think, Deacon, I'm nearly forty five, and you-- Oh we're just too old to get married. Everybody would laugh at us.

DEACON

No, they wouldn't. (TOBY ENTERS)

ARABELLA

Yes, they would. I don't want any one to know about our little affairs. We'll keep them to ourselves. Deacon, you may kiss me if you want to.

DEACON

Arabella, my Arabella. (THEY EMBRACE)

TOBY

Hold 'er Newt, she's headed for the pea patch.

ARABELLA

Oh, Toby, don't you dare tell!

TOBY

What me tell anything? Oh my goodness I'm a woman of a few words. Of course now I don't believe its so I just heard, that is, I wouldn't repeat anything for the world, but I saw you two slobbering kisses. Oh boy, hot durn, gee whiz whisker soup, wait until I tell this. (STARTS TO DOOR YELLING) Extra edition paper! Deacon Tuttle kissed Arabella Butts. He kissed her on the settee.

BRUCE

(ENTERS C.) Toby, what's the matter with you?

TOBY

I just caught Arabella and old Deacon Tuttle kissin'. And now I'm gonna tell it all over town. Watch my smoke! (EXITS CALLING) Extra! Hear all about it. Extra!

DEACON

Now, Bruce, you mustn't believe what he says.

BRUCE

I paid no attention to it, Deacon.

ARABELLA

Well, we must get ready to break the news to the parson. I suppose he will be deeply hurt.

BRUCE

Well, he's served his time as a minister. Why the old fellow is almost seventy years old.

And his ideas of the gospel are older than that.

DEACON

There's no culture or refinement to his preaching. I don't like to go to church and have the preacher talk about hell and look straight at me.

BRUCE

When the new church is built, we can tear down that ugly little brown church.

REVEREND

(ENTERS C. WITH HAT ON) How do you do. I was not aware that I had company.

DEACON

Yes, we've come back from a meeting of the trustees. Got a little news to break to you. The board of trustees of the church have decided to build a new church. Bruce is going to build it.

REVEREND

Bruce will build a good one I know.

ARABELLA

We are going to rush the construction, and have it completed by this time next year. We hope to open it on Easter Sunday.

REVEREND

A lovely time to open a church. I shall have a fitting service.

DEACON

Reverend Jones, you will have nothing to do with the new church. The church folk want a younger man in the pulpit. You've been preaching to us for thirty years, and we're tired of it all.

REVEREND

(STUNNED) You -you mean I don't preach any more.

DEACON

Now. When the new church is finished, we are going to tear down the old one, also sell this place and build a beautiful parsonage next to the church.

ARABELLA

We hope, Reverend Jones, you will not take this too hard. You should understand that you are too old--besides we've given you a chance to improve your ways. We've told you that we did not wish tramps and trash in our church, and still you insist upon bringing them there to sit beside us, and not only that you shelter an ungodly woman beneath your roof.

DEACON

Well, that's all we've got to say. We'd better be going. We've got to tend to business, and building a church is business same as any other thing. (THEY START)

REVEREND

Wait! Surely you're joking about taking my church away. You wouldn't tear down that little brown church nor this parsonage. You couldn't destroy such sacred things.

BRUCE

We've got to tear them down; we want the land to build the new church o

REVEREND

But have you the heart to do it? Bruce, in that little church I baptized you. Deacon, in that little church your mother was buried--- I said the funeral oration. Arabella, your parents both died and were buried there. Have you people the heart to tear down that old church?

DEACON

Why bring up things that are twenty years past. This is the future. Our town has become the wealthiest community for miles around. Silverda is on a boom. Everyone has money---we are a higher class of people.

REVEREND

Why---because you have money? Money doesn't make the teachings of God any higher than they already are. The gospel is not bought with gold; it is given for service.

DEACON

We do not care to talk about it, Reverend. (ALL THREE EXIT C.)

REVEREND

(BROKEN) My church! They don't want me. I'm too old. Oh God forgive them!

TOBY

(ENTERS WITH MARY L.) Gosh ding them gold toothed hypocrites. Gonna build a new church and kick you out are they? Well, I pity the preachers they get I'm gonna start savin' rotten eggs right now for Easter.

REVEREND

No, Toby, we must forgive them. They are blind with the wealth that God gave them. They are trying to gild the gospel with their filthy wealth, and it cannot be done, it cannot be done. (EXITS E.)

MARY

Oh, Toby, how can people be so cruel and unseeing?

TOBY

'Cause they're trash, that's why. They called you and me tramps cause we aint got no education, nor money, but I'd rather be just plain ignorant like I am than to have the mite of education they have, and not know a damn thing! Well, I'll be back arter while, Mary. (STARTS)

MARY

Where are you going, Toby?

TOBY

Over to get some apples.

MARY

Not out of the Deacon's orchard, Toby?

TOBY

Yep. Got to have 'em. You know an apple a day will keep the doctor away---but they aint never kept me from gettin' chased by the deacon. (EXITS C.)

MARY

Oh what shall I do? If I could only tell. I can't stand their sneers any longer. I'd run away but it would break poor Reverend Jones heart if I did.

(ENTERS C. BECOMES UNEASY AT SIGHT OF MARY) Er pard on me I came back fo my hat.

MARY

(HANDS IT TO HIM) Here it is Bruce. (HE STARTS) Oh, Bruce, I can't stand it any longer. (TOBY ENTERS UNSEEN)

BRUCE

You've got to. I can't marry you now. It would ruin my whole career. I'll have plenty of money soon, Mary. When I finsih this new church then I'll send you and the kid away.

MARY

But, Bruce, won't you---

BRUCE

I can't marry you of course not. That's foolish and impossible. I wish I'd never met you. I-- Oh it's impossible--horrible. (EXITS C.)

TOBY

Well, I'll be a bed bug's teddy bear. Say if you're a man, I'm the King of Italy.

~~ENTER~~ MARY.

Toby, you heard?

TOBY

You durn right I did.

MARY

Oh, but, Toby, you must never tell. He would be disgraced and ruined for life. I'll bear the shame and blame for him--because--because I love him. (EXITS L.)

TOBY

I'll be dadburned if I can figure it out. Gosh that forgivin' stuff is all right, but I'd rather beat the soup out of 'em first. Well, I know one thing when Easter Sunday comes if Reverend Jonas don't preach the sermon, they're gonna have one grand time in that church, 'cause I'm gonna bring the whole dog kennels and all the tramps I can find to the church, and I dare 'em to throw a one out.

ARABELIA

(ENTERS C.) Toby, you told the whole town about the Deacon and I being in love. The deacon is getting out a warrant for your arrest for slander and for stealing his apples. He saw you in his orchard again.

DEACON

(ENTERS C.) Toby, I've called the sheriff, and you're going to jail for stealing my apples.

TOBY

Ww I aint got any of your ole apples.

ARABELIA

Why look your pockets are just bulched with them already.

TOBY

Them aint apples.

ARABELIA

What are they then?

TOBY
You'd better not try to find out.

ARABELLA
Well, I will find out. (GOES TO HIM) I'll search your pockets.

TOBY
Better stay away now, I'm warning you.

ARABELLA
Don't warn me. (REACHES HAND IN POCKET PULLS OUT SNAKE) Snakes! (THROWS IT TO DEACON HE WRESTLES WITH THROWS IT TO TOBY AND TOBY THROWS IT IN THE DEACON'S PANTS. THE DEACON GETS IT OUT AND IT GOES DOWN ARABELLA'S NECK. SHE EXITS SCREAMING. THE DEACON AFATER HER)

TOBY
Gosh, I told 'em not to search me. I hope it bites her on the alama-gooselem! (EXITS)

***** NUMBER TWO *****

MARY
(GOES TO REVEREND IS WHO IS TANDING AT DOOR) Are you ready, Reverend?

REVEREND
Reveredn? You can hardly call me Reverend now---the new church is built.

MARY
You will always be Reverend to me and the poor people down by the railroad tracks.

REVEREND
I wonder where Toby is?

MARY
Tboy has been acting very mysterious these last few days. I can't understand it. HHe keeps saying something about Easter Eggs that were laid by a skunk.

TOBY
(ENTERS WITH A BASKET OF EGGS) Gone to church yet, Parson?

JMARY REVEREND
No, Toby, what have you in that basket?

TOBY
Them's Easter eggs.

REV.
Where did you get them.

TOBY
A skunk laid 'em (HOLDS IT UP TO THEIR NOSE) Smell!

MARY
(HOLDS NOSE) Oh, Toby, that's terrible!

TOBY
This was a terrible skunk. Well, I'm off for the new church. Have you seen it yet?

REVEREND

Yes. It is beautiful. Only a genius like Bruce could build such a structure. I am only sorry that they will not let the poor people in it.

TOBY

Guess they're afraid we'd scratch the carpet. Well, I'm going to church. Gosh you ought to see old Arabella Butts and Deacon Tuttle; they're all dressed up like a couple of Christmas trees. She's got on her new Easter Bonnet.

MARY

Now, Toby, you mustn't start any trouble if you go to church.

TOBY

Oh I won't. I never do. (STEPS OUT) Gosh it's kinda clouding up. Bet it rains before the day is over. (EXITS C.) (CHURCH BELL OFF STAGE)

MARY

You'd better hurry if you're going to church, Reverend. That's the last bell.

REVEREND

I'm not going. I can't. I cannot bear to see another minister in my pulpit. For all these years I've been their pastor---I've tried to give them the gospel that I know---but they don't want it---theirs is a gospel gilded with gold. Gilded Gospel! But, Mary, the spirit of God is not in that mass of stone they call a church. His spirit remains in the little brown church in the vale. (STORM AND WIND)

MARY

Listen! Doesn't that sound like a storm?

REVEREND

It doesn't seem as sunshiny as it was. Perhaps it will shower.

TOBY

Hurry! Hide me quick. I'm gonna get killed. I been to church!

REVEREND

But, Toby, it isn't time for church to be out yet, is it?

DEACON

(ENTERS C. FOLLOWED BY ARABELIA AND BRUCE) Where is he? He's going to jail for this.

ARABELIA

Oh my good Easter hat is ruined.

BRUCE

He'll have to pay for the damage he done to the church.

REVEREND

Toby, what have you done?

DEACON

He's done plenty. He brought all of the dogs and tramps in the neighborhood and marched them in the church and down the aisle as the organ played "Come to Jesus"

ARABELIA

He filled the Easter Egg basket for the Sunday School children with

rotten eggs and then threw them at us when we tried to put him out.

REVEREND

Toby, have you done this?

TOBY

Sure did, and I got old Arabella a good one---hit her behind the pew---and boy man she said phew!

ARABELLA

He done something before the service even started. When we entered the new church, we smelled the most sickening odor I ever had reach my nostrils. What sort of a mixture did you put in the church, Toby?

TOBY

Stink bombs made out of skunk soup with limbruger cheese and the Deacon's dirty socks.

REVEREND

Toby, I am sorry you have done all of this.

TOBY

Well, gosh they ain't got no business bein' so high falutin'. I told 'em that if you didn't preach that first sermon in the new church, no one ever would, and I stuck to my word. I took the new minister out and tied him to Si Perkin's Jackass and then started him down the road. And that aint all I done. I put limbruger cheese on the floor so they could step on. I filled the place full of hop toads, and garter snakes, glued all the song books together, and---and---

DEACON ARABELLA AND BRUCE

That's enough! (THUNDER AND LIGHTENING OFF STAGE)

MARY

Listen! Listen to that wind.

DEACON

A storm's coming up!

ARABELLA

Oh this is terrible. I'm so afraid of storms.

BRUCE

That lightening is awful close to the ground. It's the worst kind in the world. It zig zags and then jumps right down. (CRASH OF THUNDER AND SHOT FIRED IN BARRELL) Look! It Struck that tree in the front yard

DEACON

Look at that sky. It seems as if the wrath of God were breaking out.

REVEREND

But if our hearts be free from sin, we need not fear.

TOBY

Old Arabella's just about to shimmy out of her underwear. She's done something.

DEACON

Reverend, this is the worst storm I ever saw. What can it be?

REVEREND

There is nothing to fear. If God wants to take us he will, so why tremble?

BRUCE

But I can't die now, I can't! (LOUD CRASH OF THUNDER. STAGE GOES CLEAR BLACK THEN RED.)

TOBY

Lightening hit the new church. (CRASH AGAIN) It's falling down.

BRUCE

My church! It's destroyed.

REVEREND

And why shouldn't it be? Your church was a mockery to God. What does such a palace mean to Him above if it will not give service to all? A church for the rich is not a church for the Lord. Your gilded church of gilded gospel has fallen.

ARABELLA

Oh, Reverend, pray for us, won't you?

TOBY

Pray for yourself, you old high hat.

REVEREND

I cannot stay the hand of the Almighty when His wrath has been provoked. Confess your sins and ask forgiveness.

BRUCE

The storm is nearly over. Why be a fool and confess? It only frightened us. The storm is almost over. (LOUD CRASH OF THUNDER)

TOBY

The hell it is. You better spill what you know about Mary, Bruce. If you don't I will. I can't keep quiet no longer. He is the father of her child. (POINTS TO BRUCE) You don't deny it either.

REVEREND

Bruce, do you mean you let that girl go through all the shame and sorrow without your taking any of the blame? Were you low enough to do that?

BRUCE

Yes, I--

REVEREND

(FORGETTING HIMSELF WITH EMOTION) Then I hope you are struck dead. I never wanted to condemn in my life before, but now--(GRABS HIS THROAT

ARABELLA

(SCREAM) Wait! I'll confess too. Don't kill him.

REVEREND

And why not?

ARABELLA

Because he is my son.

DEACON

Your son?

ARABELLA

Yes. When I went to college I met a man and fell madly in love with him. I was a little fool---he said he would marry me, I fell for his talk. Before I knew it I was facing shame and disgrace. I couldn't come back to my folks with the baby, so arriving on an early morning train, I carried the bundle with Bruce in it to your door step and placed it there. Bruce is my own son, Reverend, my own son. (DROPS IN CHAIR SOBBING)

BRUCE

Oh God forgive me. I was drunk with the wine of success. All I could see was gold and the applause of the people. Mary, forgive me and let me spend my life in making amends. (TAKES HER IN HIS ARMS)

DEACON

So, Bruce is your own son.

ARABELLA

Yes, I knew I would have to tell him someday. I couldn't die with that on my mind. (THE STORM IS OVER AND THE STAGE IS LIGHTER) Why look! The storm is over!

REVEREND

Yes, the clouds of lies and hypocrisy have vanished with the revealing light of truth.

TOBY

Well, now that its all over, I want to say we just had one hell of a storm.

DEACON

The church is completley ruined.

TOBY

It was darned near ruined before the storm started.

DEACON

We'll have to use the old one again.

TOBY

Listen, who's gonna be the preacher?

ALL

Reverend Jones.

BRUCE

(ARMS AROUND MARY) Marry us, Father, at once.

REVEREND

All right, I'll get my book. (HE EXITS)

ARABELLA

(AS DEACON WHISPERS IN HER EAR) Oh, Deacon.

DEACON

Will you? (SHE WHISPERS BACK REVEREND ENTERS) Reverend, make it a double wedding?

REVEREND

You and Arabella, Deacon?

~~DEACON~~ ARABELLA

Yes! We're going to get married and adopt Toby for our son.

TOBY

I'll be damned if you do.

F I N A L E